

Debate of the Bill by Deputy August Schwingenstein (CSU) and Others in the Bavarian *Landtag* [State Parliament] Concerning the Protection of Youth against Immoral Influences (1948)

Abstract

Protecting youth in the face of the eroding authority of familial and social structures was a central topic of discussion in the postwar era. In March 1948, the many and varied causes of the crisis were enumerated in the Bavarian *Landtag*. To counter the crisis, lawmakers called for legal measures, especially against black marketeering and prostitution, for an improvement in material conditions (for example, in housing), and for a return to basic religious principles in raising and educating children.

Source

The Bavarian Landtag Budget Committee

Munich, March 11, 1948

The presenter explained that the current bill is directed against one of the worst and most oppressive manifestations of the times, namely against the dissipation and endangerment of our youth. The dimensions of this threat are evident in daily newspaper stories, in court reports, and in reports from police authorities and from welfare and public assistance organizations, all of which present a shocking picture. The dissipation and endangerment of the youth has very deep causes. We are dealing with the repercussions of the wrong-headed educational principles of the Third Reich, with the multi-year absence of fathers and often also mothers, who had to earn a living. The causes lie also in the utter inadequacy of the schools over many years, in all the unrest and chaos of our time, in the presence of so many foreigners, and so forth. Issues connected with the [Allied] occupation also factor into this.

[...]

Referring to the remarks of the presenter, Schwingenstein advocated a tougher implementation of the laws that apply here. He explained that he visited various youth welfare offices yesterday and was shocked by all the things he discovered there, things that already make Germany seem like Sodom and Gomorrah. The issue today is not so much the rebuilding of cities as the rebuilding of people from the inside, and especially the rebuilding of our youth. Youth laws are good, but one should also enact laws against the dissipation of shameless parents, for they are the main culprits.

One encounters the dissipation of the youth not only among the so-called lower classes. Instead, it reaches all the way to the so-called upper strata, where its effects are relatively more pronounced with respect to the cleverness of the sexual activity. Some dissolute parents are living today from the legalized prostitution of their children. Prostitution has once again reached such proportions that an honorable woman can no longer show herself on the street in the evening.

Black marketeers hang around outside the Simmern School, foreigners, but also Germans. They offer cigarettes and rubber prophylactics (!). They are surrounded by inquisitive youth, who get a real “hands on education” there.

[...]

We will rebuild our cities in vain if we do not have decent residents again, as in the old Germany. But that requires not merely legal measures, as the co-presenter rightly mentioned, but also a proper education. Our people, and especially our children, must be raised religiously again.

[...]

Frau Dr. Probst, agreeing with the comments by the presenter, described the problem of the decay of the families as *the* fundamental problem. It poses a threat to the entire state. This decay, however, is not only the fault of the housing problem and the misery that is the legacy of the Hitler period. Some of the legal regulations are inadequate, especially with respect to the status of single mothers. The speaker went into detail and referenced her earlier, relevant comments in the *Landtag*. She then addressed the conditions in the Eastern Zone and pointed to the decree whereby the “girlfriend,” the “female comrade” is put on a par with the wife with respect to social security. Theater plays are terminated there on the grounds that the family was being glorified too much in them. Vigilance is called for, lest the family experience further decay.

[...]

After the comments by deputy Dr. Rief, the speaker expounded in detail about the housing conditions in Munich and his experiences and efforts as the mayor of that city. Among other things, he mentioned that there are 15,000 single-room dwellings in Munich in which six persons or more have been shackled up together, day and night, for a long time. One can’t call this living anymore. The state, for all its efforts, cannot help a person who, in a destroyed city, knows no self-discipline and possesses no sense of responsibility because of the prevailing conditions. The speaker doubted whether he would live to see these terrible conditions undergo a decisive change. He does not want to condemn a youth that has become rootless but is not so completely spoiled that it is no longer capable of improvement. All that is necessary is to create the institutions that offer youth the possibility of finding a small replacement for their homeland and a family home. The conditions at school are terrible, likewise those in the hospitals and all the rest.

[...]

Source: Stenografische Berichte des Landtages. 1. Wahlperiode 1946–1950. Drucksachen. 54. Sitzung des Ausschusses für den Staatshaushalt am 11. März 1948: TOP 8 (Beilage 639), pp. 50–62; reprinted in Udo Wengst and Hans Günther Hockerts, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, pp. 448–49.

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